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"Dear Secretary Zinke and staff, I wanted to be sure you saw my Letter to the Editor responding to The Deseret's editorial on the Secretary's national monument review. Please know I continue to stand by and am eager to discuss the economic value of Grand-Staircase Escalante National Monument with the Secretary or members of his staff."

Letter: Secretary Zinke needs a credible outside review of the monuments

By Mark Austin

For the Deseret News

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Deseret News

Letter to the Editor

As the Deseret News stated in its Aug. 26 editorial on Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's national monument review: "The last thing the state needs is a haphazard review that will be changed yet again by a future president." Unfortunately, this is exactly what Interior's review has become: a disorganized, insufficient and inaccurate process. The Escalante and Boulder Chamber of Commerce's experience during Zinke's visit to Escalante in May illustrates why.

In advance of Zinke's visit, the Chamber submitted a formal request to Zinke to meet with our board members to hear firsthand the economic benefits to communities adjacent to the monument. Despite the fact that DOI confirmed a meeting with Zinke in Kanab, on the day of I was refused audience with him. We later found out that the Utah governor's office and Sen. Orrin Hatch's office vetted his list of meetings, which no doubt resulted in him meeting only with those who wish to shrink the monument and with exactly none of the many, many business owners in the area who support keeping it intact. In short, he was lied to by county commissioners in Garfield and Kane counties, state representatives and the entire Utah D.C. delegation, who wrongly proclaimed that the majority of Utahns did not support any of the monuments in Utah.

Snubs aside, it is even more troubling that Secretary Zinke has had absolutely no scientific review of the monuments conducted from within the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) or by objective and credible outside sources. The public also has no idea if any of the millions of letters sent to Zinke, with likely 95 percent supporting the monument, have been read and evaluated, since he has not responded to any letters submitted to him from supporters of the

monuments in question.

Considering that Zinke's woefully inadequate review is putting our heritage — and livelihoods — in peril, it seems that listening to us is the least he could do.

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